

"Rattle and Snap"
(George Polk-Granbery Home)
Near Columbia, Tennessee

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PHOTOGRAPHS
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA
District of Tennessee

Historic American Buildings Survey
J. Frazer Smith, District Officer
W. Jeter Eason, Deputy District Officer
404 Goodwyn Institute Building, Memphis,
Tennessee.

ADDENDUM

"RATTLE AND SNAP" (George Polk-Granbery Home)
Near Columbia, Maury County, Tennessee.

Owner. William Ridley (Co-owner with another party)

Date of Erection. 1845

Architect. Unknown

Builder. George Polk

Present Condition. The house, though it is not receiving intelligent care, nor is it receiving replacements as needed, is still in very good condition. It is in all appearances exactly as it was built. Very little restoration would be needed to put it in the original condition. The out-buildings are in fairly poor condition.

Number of Stories. Two stories and cellar.

Material of Construction. Foundations are built of stone quarried in the vicinity of the place. Floors - hand hewn timbers with pine wide width flooring. The trim was made locally from local woods. Exterior and interior walls - brick. Exterior walls - stucco veneering. Metal roof, wood shingles on out-buildings.

Other Existing Records. Besides the ¹⁰~~two~~ photographs recorded in this record, it is also recorded in the "History of Homes and Gardens of Tennessee" published for the Garden Study Club of Nashville by the Parthenon Press 1936. FRAZER SMITH. WHITE PETERS

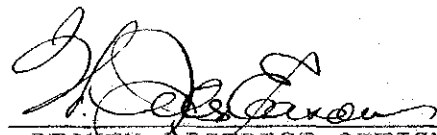
Additional Data. Rattle and Snap is a two story typical farm house. In exterior appearance varies from the simple classic portico as seen on most houses of that time. The front porch projects almost all the way across the front of the house with an additional break in the porch at the center projecting farther forward. The porch is the full height of the building, having three bays for the center and farthest projecting feature flanked by extensions of the porch on either side having two bays each. There is a cast iron balcony within the porch and back of the center feature, as is typical of that period. Facing the house there is a minor porch on the right side and another minor

porch on the left side. The one on the right, one² story high, is of Corinthian Order. The one on the left varies and in this variation adds a rather distinctive touch to the structure. It is a very delicate cast iron affair projecting from the house, and surmounted by, but unattached to, is a small cast iron balcony. There is a servants' or service wing attached to the house at the rear to form an "L" shape and which in the character with others of this period degenerates in detail as it gets farther from the living quarters of the Master. The interior wood work, cornice, mantle and columns are beautifully done in wood and in plaster. No expense seems to have been spared in the execution.

Rattle and Snap was built by George Polk and was the last of the Polk built mansions in Maury County. It was built by him with materials principally at hand by slave labor and is remarkable for its delicate handling, especially in view of the craftsmen, if they be so called, who did the actual work. It remained in the family of Polk until 1867 when it was bought by James J. Granbery. It remained in the Granbery family until 1920 when it became the property of Mr. William Ridley and a woman whose name I do not have.

The gardens which it originally had have disappeared, but the beautiful approach and the beautiful setting of trees which surround it remain. It is about one half mile off the highway and approached through an avenue of trees.

All in all Rattle and Snap is another expression of that luxury which existed prior to the War Between the States and which, unfortunately, has never since been expressed so beautifully and which remains with us only in the form of those buildings which were built before the war.



DEPUTY DISTRICT OFFICER HABS

Rev. Aug. 20, '36 T.W.

"RATTLE AND SNAP"

The two houses, "Rattle and Snap" and the "Hamilton House", are the only two houses still standing of the four original Polk built houses. The "Hamilton House" was the first built and "Rattle and Snap" was the last. The other two have been destroyed either by fire or demolition.

A fact of interest is the method in which "Rattle and Snap" received its name. It seems that Rattle and Snap was the name of a gambling game popular in North Carolina with the Polks before they moved to Middle Tennessee. George Polk, son of Colonel William Polk, won the land in Middle Tennessee during a game of Rattle and Snap while he was in North Carolina and then moved to Middle Tennessee and built thereon the house which he named for the game, "Rattle and Snap", because of having won the property in that way. While the rest of the story is not included in the published "Memoirs of Mary Polk Branch" who was one of the later Polks, it seems that the older natives verified the fact that George Polk lost the property and the house shortly after building it in the same game, Rattle and Snap.

For purpose of record some mention should be given to the other two Polk built houses. They were "Ashwood Hall", now destroyed, built by Bishop Leonidas Polk and later sold to his brother Andrew, both of whom were sons of Col. William Polk. The other house "Westbrook", now burned, was built by Rufus Polk.

Colonel William Polk, the head of the Polk Clan in Middle Tennessee, was a Colonel in the Revolutionary War and all of his sons, George, Lucius, Andrew and Bishop Leonidas, were Generals in the Civil War, and played probably the biggest part of any one family in the South during this war. A more detailed summary of the activities of the Polk family in Middle Tennessee will be incorporated in the survey of "Hamilton Place" which is to follow.

W. Jeter Eason.

p. 4

RATTLE AND SNAP - OAKWOOD HALL
George Polk - Granbery home
Near Columbia, Maury County, Tennessee

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"It was in 1845 that George Polk began the erection of his home -- the last of the mansions of the Polks to be built in Maury County. The construction of such a home, with its fine brick and stone work, is indeed a monument to the Negro laborers who built it. The magnificent columns of the portico came in sections by boat from Cincinnati to Nashville, and were hauled by ox wagons from Nashville to Columbia. A story is told of how, during the Civil War, it became necessary to find a safe hiding place for the family silver. A small son of Mr. Polk was lowered into one of these columns, and on a platform the silver was placed where it was secure until the war was over.

In the picture is (!) shown details of columns, cornices, and doorways in the hall. These are repeated in varying designs throughout the great rooms of the house. Other architectural features are the two spiral stairways and the two dining-rooms which, upon State occasions, were thrown into one great banquet hall.

In 1867, Rattle and Snap was bought by Joseph J. Granbery, who changed the name of the estate to Oakwood Hall. It was owned by his family for 53 years.

There are those who still remember the gardens and wide-bordered walk leading through the lovely rose garden to the three greenhouses, the formal rose beds forming an intricate pattern in the setting of blue-grass lawn. A second garden devoted to flowers was divided by a high hedge of lilac from the vegetable plots, arbors, orchards, and lawn."

From History of Homes and Gardens of Tennessee
Compiled by The Garden Study Club of Nashville
pages 232-234

ADDENDUM
FOLLOWS...

Addendum to:

Rattle and Snap
(Polk-Granberry House)
U.S. Route 43 (Andrew Jackson Highway)
Columbia vicinity
Maury County
Tennessee

HABS No. TN-63

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Originally recorded as

"Rattle and Snap"
(George Polk-Granberry House)
Near Columbia
Maury County
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PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
National Park Service
Department of the Interior
Washington, D.C.

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HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

ADDENDUM TO:

RATTLE AND SNAP
(Polk-Granberry House)

HABS No. TN-63

Addendum to 4 data pages previously transmitted to the Library of Congress.

Location: South side of U.S. Route 43 (Andrew Jackson Highway), 7.5 miles west of Columbia, Columbia vicinity, Maury County, Tennessee.

USGS Mount Pleasant 7-1/2 Quadrangle
UTM Coordinates: 16.485850.3935080

Present Owner and Occupant: Amon Carter Evans (September 1979).

Present Use: Private residence.

Significance: Often referred to as "the most monumental house in Tennessee," this house is a fine example of the lavish scale on which many Southern houses were built in the period 1845-1860. It is particularly noteworthy for its ornamental iron work and for the fine detail of its Corinthian columns both inside and out. The structure was designated a National Historic Landmark in November 1971.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Date of erection: 1845.
2. Architect: The architect is not known, but it is possible that Adolphus Heiman designed the house. A letter written by the builder's daughter, Mrs. Caroline Polk Horten, states that "The work of building the house was done by slaves who were skilled craftsmen in their respective trades."
3. Original and subsequent owners: The house was built on land that was part of a grant of 5,648 acres from the Governor of North Carolina to the builder's father, Colonel William Polk, in 1794. The unusual name of the house was given to the property by Polk because of its having been won from the Governor in a gambling game called "rattle and snap." The game was described by William Polk's granddaughter, Caroline Polk Horten, as a game of "beans." Colonel Polk gave his Tennessee land to his five sons, four of whom built distinguished houses on their property. Rattle and Snap was built for the youngest son, George Knox Polk, on the

southwest quadrant of the Rattle and Snap grant. This property had been left to him in William Polk's will in 1834. George Polk came to Tennessee in 1840 and built his house five years later.

The Polks lived there until 1867, when the house was deeded to Joseph Granberry (sometimes spelled Granbery). During this ownership the house was known as Oakwood Hall.

The Granberry family sold the house in 1919 to W. P. Ridley and W. A. Dale. During their ownership the house was unoccupied except for a caretaker. Mrs. Charles W. Jewell, an heir of Ridley, bought the interests of Dale's heirs in 1950. The house was sold by Mr. and Mrs. Oliver M. Babcock in 1953, to Mr. and Mrs. William B. Allen in 1973, and to Mr. Amon Carter Evans in 1979.

4. Original plans and construction: Mrs. Caroline Polk Horten, who was a daughter of George Polk, wrote the following description of Rattle and Snap:

"'Rattle and Snap' was built of brick and stone. The bricks were made on the place, the stone hauled by wagon from Cincinnati. The portico, said to be one of the most imposing in the South, is built of solid stone masonry with ten huge Corinthian columns from the floor to the roof. They were made in sections and with the stone were hauled by wagon trains from Cincinnati. The cost of this magnificent portico alone was \$40,000.

"The interior was in perfect accord with the exterior, large elegant drawing rooms, halls, sitting rooms, dining room, bedrooms, four bathrooms, in all eighteen rooms.

"The spacious grounds and gardens covered acres, planned and planted under the personal supervision of Mrs. Polk by the head-gardener--five greenhouses. Many rare shrubs and plants were imported from time to time.

"I quite remember as a small child being told that our stables and coach house which was all under one roof was often mistaken for a church. I suppose they took the pigeon house for a belfry."

None of the original outbuildings remain. No attempt has been made in the present garden to follow the lines of the original garden.

The house appears to be built of native stone rather than of stone brought in from Cincinnati. Since no records are known to exist which account for the costs involved in building the house, it is possible that Mrs. Horten's memory may have been in error on the costs of the portico.

5. Alterations and additions: The house has stood virtually unchanged since its erection. In adapting the house to modern living, the present owners have installed heating, lighting, and plumbing so that a minimum amount of change was necessary. The double dining room which ran parallel to the front of the house was divided by a wall so that part of the original room forms a library and the other part forms a combination kitchen and breakfast room. The repairs to the house in 1954 were done by Spence Parsons, carpenter, under the personal supervision of the owner. (Other changes have not been recorded).
- B. Historical Context: William Polk was a North Carolinian and a Revolutionary soldier. In his later years he claimed that his was "the first American blood spilled south of Lexington" during the Revolution, having been shot from his horse during an early encounter with the Tories. He fought at Brandywine and Germantown and spent the winter at Valley Forge. He was with General William Davidson when the General was killed at Cowlin's Ford. It is said that it was Polk who suggested the name for Davidson County, North Carolina, now Tennessee.

In 1784, Polk was appointed Surveyor-General of the Middle District of Tennessee. He opened an office in Nashville and through his speculation in Tennessee land became one of the largest landholders in the state. By 1819 he owned 100,000 acres. William Polk never moved permanently to Tennessee, but several of his sons did.

The Rattle and Snap tract of 5,648 acres had been reserved for Polk's sons by his second wife, Sarah Hawkins. They were Lucius Jurnik, who built Hamilton Place; Leonidas, who built Ashwood; Rufus King, who built Westwood; Andrew, who bought Ashwood from his brother and enlarged it; and George, who built Rattle and Snap. The pioneer days were past when these wealthy young men came to Tennessee. They built fine homes, established fortunes in land, slaves, and business ventures, and became leaders in the social life of the time. Only Hamilton Place and Rattle and Snap remain standing.

At the point where their properties joined, the brothers under the leadership of Leonidas Polk built St. John's Episcopal Church. They shared its cost, worshipped in it, except for Bishop Leonidas Polk, who is buried in New Orleans, they are buried there.

PART 11. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement:

1. Architectural character: This two-and-a-half story brick structure consists of the rectangular block of the main house, with a rectangular service ell at the rear. The front of the house has a porch and portico of Corinthian columns.

2. Condition of fabric: Excellent.

B. Description of Exterior:

1. Overall dimensions: Main house: 66' (five-bay front) by 54', two-and-a-half stories.

Rear ell: 20' by 54', two stories (rearmost section is one story).

2. Foundations: Tennessee limestone ashlar.

3. Walls: Brick, laid in common bond. North (front) wall is faced with stucco, painted light gray.

4. Structural system, framing: Brick bearing walls and interior partitions, with heavy timber joists.

5. Porches:

a. Front (north) porch: 55' wide, centered on 66' facade. There are ten columns and four pilasters. The columns include four that are set forward beneath a projecting portico with a low-angled pediment. Bases are limestone. Shafts are wood. The capitals are Corinthian and are assembled of cast-iron elements. There is a second floor balcony with a cast-iron railing across the three recessed entry bays.

b. West (side) porch: Four-column entry porch with cast-iron modified Corinthian capitals based on those used on the Tower of the Winds in Athens.

c. Rear porches: L-shaped, two story galleries are fitted into the space between the rear of the house and the service wing. These galleries have square wood posts and scroll-sawn balusters. A one-story porch is located beyond a set of louvered doors, alongside the one-story section at the rear of the service wing.

d. East (side) porch: Cast-iron porch has a semicircular center projection and a balcony.

6. Chimneys: There are four interior brick end chimneys in the main house -- two on the west and two on the east. There is an interior brick chimney toward the rear of the main house, and an interior brick end chimney at the rear of the two-story section of the service ell. All have a plain design.

7. Openings:

- a. Doorways and doors: There are double doors with rectangular transoms, flanked by single doors with semicircular transoms in the recessed front entry area, on both the first and second stories. The west entrance has a single door with sidelights and transom. Various doors lead from the rear galleries into the main house and the service ell. Some have door-length louvered shutters. The east porch has French doors and door-length louvered shutters.
- b. Windows and shutters: In most cases, the windows are six-over-six double-hung. (Other windows were not recorded). Louvered shutters are used on most windows. The sills are stone. The hoodmolds are cast-iron.

8. Roof:

- a. Shape, covering: The main block has a hip roof with standing seam metal covering. The service ell has a gable roof, broken to a lower pitch over the gallery, with standing seam metal covering. The front portico roof is a pedimented gable.
- b. Cornice: Greek Corinthian entablature, with simplified architrave.
- c. Dormers: Three dormers are situated on the rear slope of the hip roof over the main house block. They have gable roofs and a triangular-shaped pattern on their front faces.

C. Description of Interior:

1. Floor plans: The main entry hall is separated from the cross hall by two columns and two pilasters. The cross hall contains a stairway at the west end. On the east side of the entry hall is a double dining room, now separated to form a library and a kitchen. The dining room is in the northwest corner. The south ell is composed of two rooms and a hall. The second floor has the same plan and is used for baths, storage and bedrooms.
2. Stairways: The primary stair is in the cross hall. There is a service stairway in the back wing.
3. Flooring: Wide-board wood (pine and/or poplar) flooring.
4. Wall and ceiling finish: Painted plaster. There are ceiling medallions and heavy modillion cornices.

5. Openings:

- a. Doorways and doors: Thruways have eared architraves with bead moldings and ogee-shaped cornices above. Six- and four-panel doors have the same architraves.
- b. Windows: Not recorded.

6. Decorative features and trim: There is ornamental plaster work on the ceilings and cornices (see also Wall and ceiling finish above). Columns with modified Corinthian capitals divide the parlors, entrance hall and cross hall. The carrara marble mantelpieces have different ornamental motifs and oval shaped openings. (Other notable features were not recorded at the time this survey was made).

D. Site:

- 1. General setting and orientation: The house sits on a hilltop and faces north.
- 2. Outbuilding: One brick storage house.

PART III. SOURCES OF INFORMATION

A. Bibliography:

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RATTLE AND SNAP
(Polk-Granberry House)
HABS No. TN-63 (Page 11)

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HABS Historian
1975

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National Park Service
August 1971

Edited by: Susan McCown
HABS Historian
Spring 1985

ADDENDUM TO
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(Polk-Granbery House)
U.S. Rt. 43 (Andrew Jackson Hwy.)
Columbia vicinity
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